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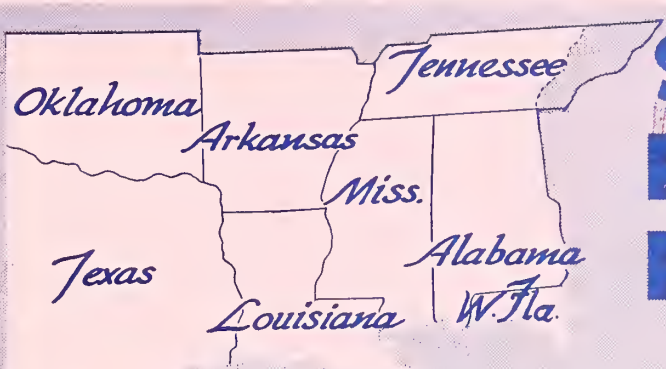

SOUTHERN FOREST PEST REPORTER

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Spot infestations of the southern pine beetle have continued to decline in Mississippi and Alabama. There has been no evidence of current activity in Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, or Louisiana. Occasional salvaged trees harboring the southern pine beetle, however, have been found on routine skidway inspections in southeast Texas.

Ips beetle populations have increased rapidly in drought-stricken areas of Louisiana, Arkansas, and Texas, and have caused heavy pine mortality in some places. The situation has become extremely severe in many sections of southeast Texas.

Outbreaks of the black turpentine beetle involving scattered trees and small groups of trees have been general and increasing on Federal, State, and private lands throughout the South.

SOUTHERN PINE BEETLE

The southern pine beetle, which in recent years has caused heavy losses on the Homochitto National Forest and adjacent lands in Mississippi, is at present of relatively minor importance. Occasional groups of three to five infested pines are still appearing on Federal lands, and are being cut out and treated with benzene hexachloride.

On the Talladega and Bankhead National Forests, Alabama, scattered infestations of an acre or less continue to appear, but are being controlled immediately.

An outbreak of the southern pine beetle involving twenty acres of spruce pine was discovered on private holdings in southwest Butler County, Alabama, in late August. Within a few days, salvage crews removed the infested trees, but on a post-control check a few newly infested trees were found and quickly removed. Another outbreak, involving about 1 acre of timber, was later located six miles to the northeast. It has been completely salvaged and no further spread has been reported.

Former areas of infestation on private lands in Tallapoosa and Coosa Counties, east-central Alabama, were inspected by a State district forester, and very little beetle activity was found.

While near-normal rainfall and cooler weather may keep the southern pine beetle in check until next spring, it should be remembered that in Alabama and Mississippi the beetle has, in past years, suddenly flared up during the late fall, killing trees in groups up to several acres in size. Amid the fall hardwood coloration the dying pines usually go unobserved until too late for control measures. Then, by the time freezing weather comes, the beetles have become established in widely scattered trees in which they overwinter. The brood trees lose color very slowly during the winter, and the infestations are therefore hard to locate.

BLACK TURPENTINE BEETLE

Numerous scattered infestations of the black turpentine beetle have occurred on Federal, State, and private lands in south Arkansas, east Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and west Florida. Most of the trouble is on low, normally wet sites that were selectively logged during recent dry periods.

Outbreaks on the Sam Houston, Davy Crockett, and Sabine National Forests in Texas; the Kisatchie National Forest in Louisiana; and the Homochitto National Forest in Mississippi are being controlled by salvage and spraying of standing trees and stumps.

Control on the Biloxi District of the DeSoto National Forest, Mississippi, is progressing satisfactorily. Most of the remaining infestations are along creek bottoms and on turpentine-faced trees on higher land. It is hoped that a large fall build-up can be avoided.

On the Blackwater River State Forest in northwest Florida, turpentine beetles began to attack turpentine-faced trees in late June. Drought undoubtedly contributed to the start of the infestation. As in many other outbreaks, the beetles first invaded along creek bottoms

and on other sites normally quite moist, and then moved up and away from the bottom areas. In late August, when approximately 800 of the 3,000 faced trees had been attacked, the butts of all faced trees were treated with benzene hexachloride. Survival of the sprayed infested trees and control of the beetles have been excellent.

IPS BARK BEETLES

Continued hot, dry weather in south and southwest Arkansas has increased the activity of Ips bark beetles. Heavy mortality of pines has occurred in dry areas of north and west central Louisiana, and the situation has become extremely severe in drought-stricken portions of southeast Texas.

An aerial reconnaissance was made in late September over private holdings in parts of Liberty, Hardin, Tyler, Polk, and San Jacinto Counties, Texas. Dead and dying pines were fairly closely scattered over the entire area, occurring in groups of one to fifteen trees. Of particular note were the Fuqua-Votaw section and the region southeast and west of Cleveland. It was estimated that in parts of these areas as many as ten pines per acre were dead.

It appears that the primary cause of the disturbance is drought, which weakens the trees and makes them vulnerable to attack by Ips beetles. Some of the dying pines showed no evidence of Ips infestation, and in one area natural reproduction had suffered severe mortality. Since damage appeared to be reaching serious proportions, foresters and timber owners were notified and the feasibility of salvage suggested. Though drought and Ips are the causes of the present trouble, landowners should not overlook the possibility that the southern pine beetle may move into these weakened stands and build up unnoticed.

Increasing tree mortality and activity of Ips beetles is expected to continue until the arrival of soaking rains and cold weather.

PINE NEEDLE MINER

The pine needle miner, which has been responsible for the conspicuous browning of longleaf pine needles in southeast Texas and west-central Louisiana, has been identified as Exoteleia pinifoliella. It is probably the same species that is currently infesting longleaf pine in north Alabama. The insect is not considered to be important, although it is undoubtedly responsible for some growth loss.

RED-HEADED PINE SAWFLY

Larvae of the red-headed pine sawfly severely defoliated 3-year-old longleaf pines in a small plantation near Walker, Louisiana, during October. Near Denning, Texas, scattered defoliation also occurred on 4-year-old loblolly pine throughout the summer and fall.

TEXAS LEAF-CUTTING ANT

The Texas leaf-cutting ant, or town ant, is one of the most important insects affecting the survival of pine seedlings in many parts of east Texas and central Louisiana. Where town ants are abundant, it is impossible to establish pine seedlings during the winter months, unless the ant colonies are first destroyed. Now is the time to make plans to eradicate this pest if planting or direct seeding is to be done in future months.

TRAINING SESSIONS

Through the cooperation of the Louisiana Forestry Commission, 100 foresters, timber owners, and county agents received training on the identification and control of forest insects at a series of meetings held in August and September.

Similar training sessions are planned for west Florida in October, and for Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Mississippi during the spring or early summer of 1957.

FIELD REPORT CARDS

The Southern Forest Experiment Station earnestly requests foresters, county agents, and others to report any unusual occurrences of forest, plantation, and nursery pests in their areas.

Self-addressed and franked Forest Insect Field Report Cards have been prepared and distributed to volunteer cooperators in the field. The response in recent months has been increasing and much useful information has been gained. All foresters in the South are urged to cooperate in this detection and reporting program. Field Report Cards are available for the asking.

SOUTHERN FOREST INSECT WORK CONFERENCE

The first Southern Forest Insect Work Conference was held in Athens, Georgia, September 11-12. Forty-one entomologists, foresters, and educators from the Southeast and South participated. Discussions included State by State reports of the current status of forest insects, organized control programs, insect detection surveys, appraisal surveys, and research projects. Mutual problems were brought to light and a great deal was gained by those who attended.